A Year in Preventing Blindness

Good Eyesight—
the Birthright of Every Child

1927

National Society for the Prevention of Blindness
370 Seventh Avenue
New York, N. Y.

WW 2330
N21

A Year in Preventing Blindness

Thirteenth Annual Report

December, 1927

National Society for the Prevention of Blindness
370 Seventh Avenue
New York, N. Y.

Let There Be Light

IT is the twentieth anniversary of the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, which began a score of years ago as a State Committee composed of a few public-spirited men and women. On such an occasion it is of great significance to be able to say that since the inception of this Committee, in 1908, ophthalmia neonatorum as a cause of blindness in schools for the blind has dropped 64.3 per cent; that sight-saving classes have increased to 292 from 2 in 1911; that pre-school eye testing is spreading all over the United States; that from the few of us who began in 1908, a vast group has formed, numbering a score of thousands; that from October, 1926, to December, 1927, alone, more than 80,000 miles were traveled in carrying the light of sight-saving over the United States, Canada, and Great Britain.

But it is of even greater significance that ophthalmia neonatorum still remains to be completely eradicated; over 4,700 sight-saving classes are still needed; pre-school eye work has only begun; trachoma still remains for the most part a baffling disease from the epidemiologic and etiologic points of view; eye hazards in industry are still a problem.

The National Society for the Prevention of Blindness presents this Report, with appreciative acknowledgment of all the co-operation it has received from official and voluntary organizations and from the vast group to whom the whole conservation of vision movement is indebted—the members of the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness.

Wm. Fellows Morgan

PRESIDENT

THE *National Society for the Prevention of Blindness pays tribute to its directors:* J. A. SHAWAN, 1850–1927, *and* IRA A. PLACE, 1854–1928.

Prevent Blindness by—

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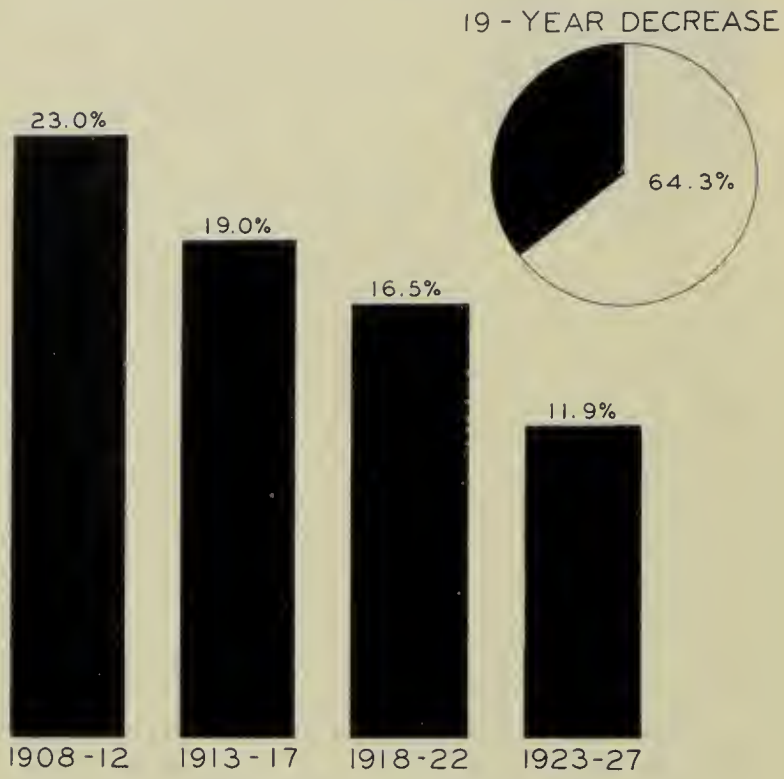
Preventing Eye Troubles in Babies

THE interest of the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness during 1927 in babies' eyes may be divided into several classifications: Ophthalmia neonatorum; the effect of sunlight on babies' eyes; and syphilitic infections.

Ophthalmia Neonatorum.—The eradication of ophthalmia neonatorum still continues to be a problem of the National Society. According to the statistics received from the American Foundation for the Blind, on ophthalmia neonatorum in schools for the blind, the incidence for 1927 is 9.5 per cent. This indicates a very striking reduction. The inquiry on present practices in health departments and in departments of obstetrics in hospitals and medical schools in regard to ophthalmia neonatorum, which was undertaken during 1926 by the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness in co-operation with the Committee on Conservation of Vision of the State and Provincial Health Authorities of North America, was published during 1927 and had a wide circulation among health and educational groups. Since the original study was made, information has been secured indicating that Iowa also distributes silver nitrate to physicians and midwives, making the statistics on distribution of silver nitrate in the United States as follows: to physicians and midwives, 31 states; to physicians only, 3 states; to midwives only, 4 states; no provision, 14 states.

"See for Life," a radio talk on ophthalmia neonatorum by the medical director, subsequently published in the *News Letter* of the National Society, was requested by officials of the State Departments of Health of Louisiana, West Virginia, and Tennessee, who distributed copies to all doctors and midwives in their respective states.

Blindness Due to Ophthalmia Neonatorum*



* IN SCHOOLS FOR THE BLIND

Sunlight in Babies' Eyes.—The effect of sunlight on the eyes has been a much-disputed question and one upon which the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness has been called for advice. The problem has very pertinent application in the increasing practice of giving sun baths to babies. Direct sunlight is essential to babies' health. It is a preventive of rickets and tuberculosis. The medical director of the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, during the year, conducted an inquiry by correspondence and personal interview with a group of nationally eminent pediatricians and ophthalmologists who have wide experience in prescribing sun baths for babies. It was the consensus of opinion among this group who responded to the inquiry that the deleterious effects of sunlight on babies' eyes were greatly over-estimated; that babies, as well as adults, instinctively close their eyes against glare. It was

Correct Exposure for Eye Protection

recommended, however, that instructions be given that babies can receive sun baths without having the rays of the sun beaming directly overhead. The baby can be placed in a carriage, its feet away from the sun, with the sun beaming from an angle behind the carriage, so that the bony structure of the forehead forms a natural shade for the baby's eyes.

Syphilitic Infections.—Realizing the seriousness of the effects of venereal diseases on the eyes, the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness has continued its interest not only in making the subject part of its research inquiry but a prominent part of its annual conference held in Chicago. At this conference, of which one session was held jointly with the Illinois Social Hygiene League and the Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness, a number of eminent syphilologists and obstetricians presented pertinent aspects on the relation between the eradication of venereal diseases and the lessening of eye defects and diseases.*

* For details see *Proceedings* of the 1927 Annual Conference of the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, October 13–15, 1927.

Eye Clinics for Pre-School Children

THE pre-school eye clinic study undertaken by the National Society in March, 1925, continues to be one of the most important steps in preventing defective vision. During 1927 activities developed along two courses: First, the continuation of establishing demonstration clinics in order to ascertain whether the conducting of eye tests among pre-school children will lessen eye defects; and, second, the giving of demonstrations all over the United States before representative nursing and health groups of the methods used in securing the visual acuity of pre-school children.

Pre-School Clinics.—The study of children reached through the Brooklyn Kindergarten Health Demonstration came to an end in June, 1927, and at the same time the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness withdrew from direct contact with the pre-school clinic run by the Clinton Neighborhood Conference at Hartley House—having assembled findings from 327 children in these centers, and having inaugurated a form of eye inspection to be carried on at Hartley House by local workers in conjunction with the regular health examinations.

The clinic at Union Health Center on East 104th Street was discontinued during the summer, but resumed activities in September and work here is being carried on by a volunteer

nurse and an assistant from the National Society's staff, as outlined in a previous report.

In November co-operative relations were begun with the Lower East Side Community Council through the establishment of a mobile clinic in the section of New York east of Broadway and south of Houston Street. The first unit was opened at Henry Street Settlement, where the kindergarten children, after general health examination, were routed to "play" with the public health nurse and her assistant making eye inspections under the National Society's direction. With the close of 1927 inspections at Henry Street Settlement were still unfinished, but plans were made for moving the eye clinic on to another community house immediately on completion of the Society's work at this center. A letter from the local neighborhood and health worker expresses the hope that in future a study of eye conditions may be included in the Settlement's general health program.

Special arrangements were made for inspecting the eyes of two groups of kindergarten children at the Ethical Culture School and Bethlehem Day Nursery, making a total of 516 children studied up to January 1, 1928. More than one-fourth of these were routed for careful examination by the ophthalmologists who have continued their volunteer service in this connection.

Demonstrations of Pre-School Eye Testing.—In order to indicate to groups all over the United States the most effective way of testing the vision of pre-school children a public health nurse was secured as staff associate by the National Society, who began her work by securing the visual acuity of the pre-school children in the Brooklyn Free Kindergartens. Following that experience, however, the demand for demonstrations in other parts of the state, and in other states, was so great that much of her time was

Showing the Way

Preschool Eye Demonstrations During 1927

● Demonstrations Given

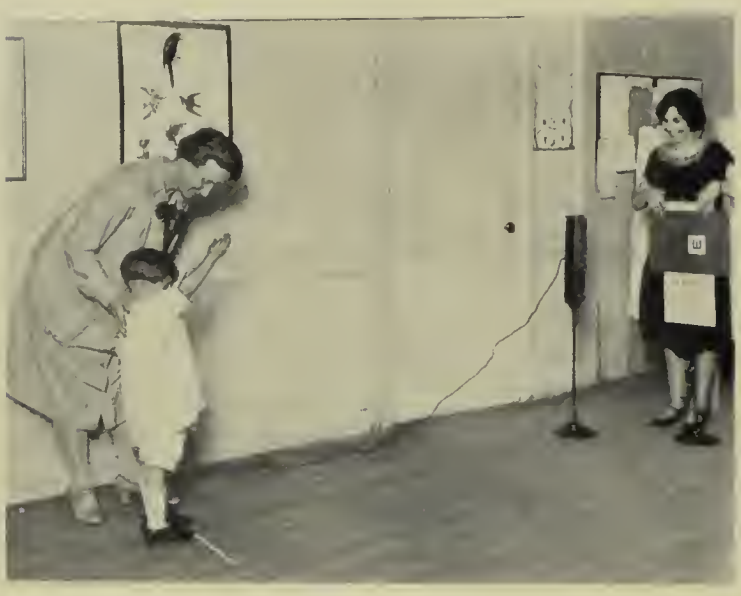
○ Demonstrations to be Given

taken in presenting before public health and nursing groups a demonstration of how the eyes of little children may be tested. During 1927 alone 69 demonstrations were given in 16 states and 41 cities. In making these trips the staff associate covered more than 20,500 miles and reached 5,600 people who represent key individuals in their particular localities and who are in positions to spread the gospel not only of pre-school eye work, but of conservation of vision in general.

Pre-school eye-testing demonstrations formed an active part of the 1927 Annual Conference of the National Society.*

* A description of the procedure is given in Publication 49 of the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness and is available upon request.

Pre-School Eye Testing



Caring for School Children's Eyes

DURING 1927 the staff of the National Society covered over 80,000 miles in its educational and campaign efforts for conserving vision. A large part of this mileage was traveled by the associate director, who is recognized as one of the leading experts on sight-saving class work. In addition to the general program of saving the sight of school children, one of the most important publications used was, "Conserving the Sight of School Children," written under the chairmanship of Dr. Thomas B. Wood, who represents a Joint Committee of the American Medical Association, the National Education Association, and the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness. This publication, during 1927, was under revision, which will permit of more detailed information regarding the testing of vision of pre-school and school children and an added chapter on the lighting of school rooms and will be available early in 1928.

Sight-Saving Class Work.—The number of sight-saving classes in the United States has grown from 265 in 1926, to 292 in 1927. While such an increase is promising, it is of importance to realize that over 4,700 additional classes are still needed in order that all school children with sufficiently defective vision to require special eye care receive adequate educational and health advantages. In addition to the general campaign among interested school and lay persons

80,000 Miles o

Communities Visite

✳ October, 1926 th

f Sight-Saving
d During 1926-1927*

ough December, 1927

for the development of sight-saving classes through correspondence and personal interview, a nation-wide campaign tour was carried on in 62 cities in 28 states and provinces by the associate director in promoting interest in sight-saving class work.

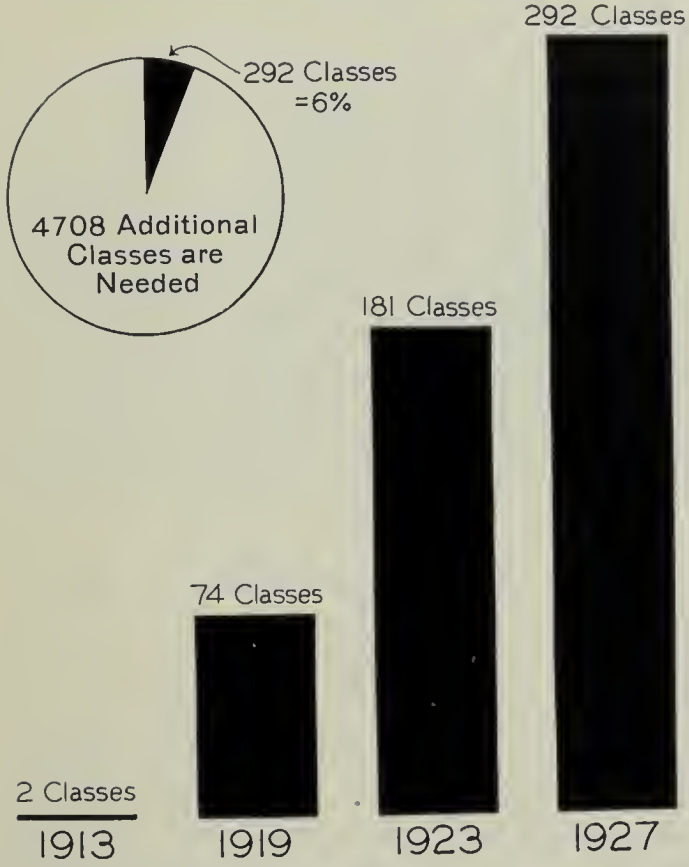
Two of the most active sessions of the 1927 Annual Conference in Chicago were those occupied with sight-saving class problems. Complete proceedings of these two meetings were published as a special issue of the *Sight-Saving Class Exchange* and were circulated among all the sight-saving class teachers in the United States.*

The *Sight-Saving Class Exchange* is published five times a year, presenting the mechanics and technique of organizing and conducting sight-saving classes. Courses on Eye Hy-

* For complete report see *The Sight-Saving Class Exchange* for December, 1927.

Corner of a Typical Sight-Saving Class

Sight-Saving Classes in the United States



giene and Administration and Methods in Sight-Saving Class Work were given at the University of Cincinnati, the University of Southern California, and Western Reserve University. The first two of these courses were given in co-operation with the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, and staff members presented different aspects of the courses. The demand for sight-saving class teachers continues to grow and requests are frequently addressed to the National Society for the names of specially trained teachers.

Campaigning Against Trachoma

CONTINUOUS interest has been maintained by the staff of the National Society in the ravages of trachoma. It is with a great deal of satisfaction that we look upon the interest already aroused, both in search for the causative factor, and in a study of the life history of epidemiology of the disease.

Dr. Hideyo Noguchi,* of the Rockefeller Institute, has resumed his search for the cause of trachoma and within the year preliminary reports indicate that his patience and experiments have entrapped in material secured from the eye of an Indian suffering from this disease, a germ not heretofore described. With this germ in pure culture, Dr. Noguchi, by injecting the germs under the lining of the upper lids of chimpanzees and monkeys, produces a condition resembling what is believed to be early stages of trachoma. This discovery may have a very direct bearing upon establishing the etiology of trachoma. Ophthalmologists, health officers and social agencies are hopeful that the facts may soon be fully established to the satisfaction of all.

The first comprehensive study of the epidemiology of the disease is being carried out under the United States Public Health Service with families from which some member has come to

* Since the writing of this report the National Society has learned with deep regret that Dr. Noguchi died, a victim of yellow fever, which he had been engaged in studying.

Trachomatous Family in Mountain Region

the hospital at Rolla, Missouri. The National Society is co-operating in this project through contributing a small subsidy and through personal conferences and correspondence. In order to maintain this rising tide of interest and research in both fields a special program on trachoma was arranged during the Annual Conference in Chicago which was jointly sponsored by the Committee on Conservation of Vision of the State and Provincial Health Authorities.* In this meeting physicians of world-wide experience discussed trachoma from a public health standpoint and continued the challenge for continuous research until that exact knowledge shall be acquired which is essential for extermination of this eye scourge.

* For details see *Proceedings* of the 1927 Annual Conference of the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, October 13–15, 1927.

Eliminating Eye Hazards in Industry

THE eye hazards of industrial occupations still constitute one of the most serious causes of blindness—despite the strides that have been made toward the prevention of accidents generally in industry. The Society accordingly extended its activities in the field of industry during the last year and through its educational work reached several million men and women engaged in hazardous occupations.

Two sessions of the last annual conference of the Society were held jointly with the National Safety Council and were devoted to discussions of the most effective means of safeguarding the sight of industrial workers. These were attended principally by safety engineers, ophthalmologists especially interested in industrial work, and industrial executives. The *Proceedings* of these sessions will bring the substance of the Conference to many other responsible persons in this field who were unable to attend.

A series of articles on care of the eyes, prepared by staff members, were given without charge to some 230 industrial and commercial concerns issuing magazines for their employees, the editors of which had indicated their intention to publish these articles. Arrangements were made for the publication of this same series of articles in more than 40 labor union publications and in 25 trade journals with extensive circulations. A conservative estimate indicates that

through this series the essential facts concerning eye hygiene, the prevention of accidental injury to the eyes and the importance of good lighting conditions in homes as well as places of work were brought to more than 3,000,000 persons, most of them engaged in those industries having serious accident and health hazards.

Preventing an Eye Accident in Industry*

* This illustration indicates 100 per cent safety in road repair, an operation where safety is usually neglected. The workmen are protected by goggles and the shield protects passersby.

Recognizing that most of the literature and statistics used in the industrial safety movement have been of a negative type—perhaps necessarily—the Society is conducting a survey in co-operation with the National Safety Council to discover the number of eyes saved in industry and the manner in which these eyes were saved. The results of this inquiry, which are to be published in the near future, should be of considerable help in the difficult problem of convincing plant managers of the economic value of organized efforts to safeguard vision, and should help in the equally difficult problem of arousing workmen to appreciate the need of continuous and conscientious use of all available means of guarding their eyes against the hazards of industry.

The Society has been fortunate in securing the voluntary services of a number of the most eminent industrial safety engineers in America as an advisory committee on the eye hazards of industry. It is hoped that with the counsel of these men the Society will be able during the next year to render even more effective assistance to the employers and industrial workers of America toward the conservation of vision.

Publications, Exhibits and Lecture Work

WITH the increasing interest nationally and internationally in the work of preventing blindness, the circulation of publications of the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness has, for the year 1927, passed the million mark. About 4,000 copies were sold at cost.

Publications.—During the year, in addition to the regular appearance of the *News Letter* and the *Sight-Saving Class Exchange* five times a year and the *Junior News Letter* four times a year, the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness issued nine different publications, including the twelfth annual report, *A Year in Review*, and the 1926 *Proceedings* of the National Committee.

Exhibits.—There has been an increasing demand made upon the National Society for loans of exhibit material and for distribution of literature at various public health expositions. During the year thirteen exhibits were loaned at different times throughout the United States. Most of these included the use of the graphic charts describing the work of the National Society, as well as a mechanical device with the caption, "The Most Valuable Eyes in the World," which operates by a turn of a lever on the part of the observer to whom his own eyes are disclosed in a mirror, as the most valuable eyes. The National Society is continuously engaged in improving and increasing its exhibit material to meet the increasing demands.

Demonstrating Cut-Out Exhibit

Lectures.—About 54,000 people were reached in 406 lectures given by the different staff members of the National Society throughout the United States during 1927, before public health and school organizations, clubs and medical societies. In addition, six radio talks were given, reaching a large and interested audience, judging by the number of inquiries following the talks.

Typical Press Comment

Parkersburg, West Va., News

June 28, 1927

Almost anybody who was asked what he considered his most precious possession would say his eyes. Our sympathy goes out to those who have lost their sight more quickly and in larger measure than to persons deprived of any other faculty. There is special satisfaction, therefore, in reading of the progress which is being made in reducing blindness. . . . .

Every consideration urges the speedy extension of this philanthropic and economic service.

Elizabeth, N. J., Journal

June 29, 1927

The world is coming more and more to believe the Biblical statement that no man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself. The National Committee for the Prevention of Blindness is doing a wonderful work in its efforts to prevent blindness and the influence of this work is far-reaching. A blind person usually is a considerable care to members of the family or friends, and is an economic handicap to the community. Each case of blindness prevented, therefore, not only saves the individual concerned much anguish and unhappiness, but lightens the burdens of those who would have had to care for him. Furthermore it makes the individual economically profitable to society, instead of an economic burden.

Such work deserves the support of all who have the welfare of society at heart.

Chicago Journal of Commerce

June 28, 1927

Consider what the report tells of ophthalmia neonatorum—babies' sore eyes. For centuries this has been the principal cause of blindness. The National Committee for the Prevention of Blindness has been in existence eighteen years. In those eighteen years, the percentage of children in schools for the blind who lost their sight because of ophthalmia neonatorum has been reduced more than 51 per cent.

Surely the National Committee for the Prevention of Blindness is doing a magnificent work. It would deserve cordial praise if only for its notable success in the lessening of such blindness as results from babies' sore eyes.

Salt Lake City Deseret News

August 3, 1927

The National Committee for the prevention of blindness is doing a good work in informing the public, in language easily understood, of the scientific and medical advances that are being made in sight-conservation. Co-operation is what is needed in this important matter.

Finances

Treasurer's Statement of Receipts and Disbursements Year 1927

Receipts

Memberships	$25,622.46	
Donations	99,236.29	
Cleveland Community Fund	1,000.00	
Legacies	2,500.00	
Interest on Bank Balances	482.21	
Interest on Investments	3,450.00	
Sale of Publications	291.98	
Refunds and other Receipts	317.46	
Total Receipts		$132,900.40
Balance on hand, December 31, 1926		51,659.23*
		$184,559.63

Disbursements

Budget Expenses, January 1, 1927, to December 31, 1927	$119,534.50	
Purchase of Bonds for Investment	14,430.00	
Total Disbursements		$133,964.50
Balance on hand, December 31, 1927		50,595.13*
		$184,559.63

* The pressing demands upon the Society for its various national services require that there shall be maintained a balance sufficient to meet regular and special expenses for a number of months in advance. The major portion of the two balances given above, $51,659.23 on hand December 31, 1926, and $50,595.13 on hand December 31, 1927, was carried over for this purpose. In this way the Society endeavors to safeguard its work each year during the months of June, July, August and September, when contributions from members and donors are necessarily small and demands for services are large.

Managing Director's Statement of Cash Received from the Treasurer and Disbursements Made for the Year 1927

Receipts

Balance on hand, December 31, 1926	$386.70
January 1, 1927, to December 31, 1927, cash received from Treasurer	119,534.50†
Total Receipts	$119,921.20

Disbursements

Eye Infections of Babies	$8,308.11	
Pre-School Clinics	12,881.65	
Saving the Sight of School Children	13,350.82	
Trachoma (Children and Adults)	8,361.23	
Eye Hazards in Industry	5,565.78	
Public Information and Education	8,876.75	
Correspondence	8,389.22	
Periodical Publications and their Distribution	15,739.09	
Membership	12,785.63	
National Health Council	500.00	
Office Expenses	12,194.65	
Furniture and Equipment	1,010.66	
Conference Expenses	2,160.23	
Rent	5,830.22	
Total Disbursements		$115,954.04
Balance on hand, December 31, 1927		3,967.16
		$119,921.20

† This sum of $119,534.50 was regularly budgeted to the Managing Director by the Executive Committee, and was expended solely for items appearing in the annual and monthly budgets. All expenditures are made on a modern annual and monthly budget system. The Managing Director is required by the Executive Committee to submit a detailed statement of proposed expenditures and to account carefully for expenditures made under budget limitations. Proper vouchers are on file for every expenditure.

There is a Reserve Fund, par value $85,000, which is made up of Legacies, Special Gifts and a Reserve Fund for Emergency of which the following Legacy Fund is a part.

LEGACY FUND

Date	*Name*	*Address*	*Amount*
September 1922	Mrs. Nellie E. McClanahan,	Omaha, Nebr....	$200
January 1926	Mr. Louis S. Stroock,	New York City..	250
January 1927	Mr. Solomon A. Fatman,	New York City..	2,000
November 1927	Miss Marion L. Alexander,	Port Chester, N.Y.	500
			$2,950

AUDIT

The Executive Committee requires a semi-annual audit of its books. For the year ending December 31, 1927, this complete audit was made by W. B. Dickenson & Company. A copy of this Audit will be sent, upon request, to any one wishing to make a further examination of the Society's financial operations.

Form of Bequest

I give and bequeath to the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Inc., a corporation created under the laws of the State of New York, the sum of.....Dollars for its corporate purposes.

National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Inc.

370 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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